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CEPPS/IRI Quarterly Report: February 22 – March 31, 2005

COUNTRY: East Timor

USAID Cooperative Agreement No. 497-A-00-05-00025-00

Project dates: February 22, 2005 to February 21, 2006

Total budget: \$250,000

Expenses to date: \$7,929.47

I. SUMMARY

During the one-month period of the grant, IRI staff worked on building relationships and developing materials in preparation for programmatic activities scheduled for the next 11 months. To establish the political and academic support critical to the program's success, IRI met with political party leaders and university officials who appeared receptive to participating in IRI's program. In addition, IRI initiated the development of a research library to support the informational needs of the working group and interns. Accordingly, IRI staff utilized this planning period to begin the formal establishment of the working group, set dates for the first technical training, and make preparations to launch the internship program in the next quarter.

II. BACKGROUND

The IRI program works toward the USAID Mission's strategic objectives of laying the foundation for conducting future national elections that meet international standards for open and honest elections. The election law presents a landmark opportunity for the political parties, as representatives of the citizens of Timor-Leste, to become fully engaged in the future of their own democracy. Under the CEPPS grant, IRI promotes policy-based political parties by educating political party, civil society, and female political leaders about international electoral law models and their applicability in Timor-Leste.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

In the first five weeks of the new grant, IRI staff worked on building relationships and developing materials in preparation for programmatic activities scheduled for the next 11 months. Georges Fauriol, IRI's Washington-based Senior Vice President, met with elected government officials including Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri at the end of February to discuss IRI programming in East Timor. In March, IRI's Senior Program Officer met with J. Reis, Deputy Secretary General of Fretilin and Harold Moucho, Political Adviser to the President of the National Parliament to discuss IRI's new electoral program and the importance of Fretilin member participation in the working group. A few days later IRI's Senior Program Officer met with the President of Parliament, Francisco 'Lu-Olo' Guterres, to further discuss IRI's program and request his nomination of Fretilin members and Members of Parliament to participate as members of the working group.

In addition, IRI created a management plan for the coordination of interns during this project. The plan explains how the internship program will be managed and delineates participation guidelines for all involved parties—universities, students, and IRI. IRI's Senior Program Officer met with several Dili-based university officials this quarter to discuss the intern program and distributed copies of the intern management plan so university officials could better understand how the program will operate.

IRI also established the Resource Center, complete with several new computers, a DSL broadband computer connection, and desks for interns and working group members to complete research. Independent of CEPPS funds, IRI's Washington-based Information Technology Specialist traveled to East Timor where he networked the Resource center computers, set up passwords, and installed anti-pornography software. IRI attempted to install video-teleconferencing equipment during this visit but unfortunately discovered the DSL line did not have enough bandwidth to run a quality audio/visual stream.

It should also be noted that IRI collected over 45 academic source materials for the briefing memos during this quarter. Copies of these books and articles will be sent to the East Timor office to begin the creation of a library to assist members of the working group and interns who are interested in conducting further research.

IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Results

1. Led by the political parties, members of civil society and the Timorese government will engage in inclusive, informed debate on the merits of differing electoral legal models, leading to Parliament's selection of an electoral

framework that is broadly understood by Timorese citizens, civil society leaders, and political party representatives.

No results to report.

2. Foundations for future informed debates are established, transforming how future issues can be debated between political parties, civil society and the Timorese government.

No results to report.

V. EVALUATION

IRI's past work with Fretilin has shown that this party prefers opportunities and training independent of other political parties as a tribute to their special status as the ruling party. Fretilin leadership considering participating in the working group is a strong signal that the meetings to convince them of the value of an inclusive process regarding the electoral legal framework were successful. In the next quarter IRI will work to demonstrate the immediate and tangible benefits to Fretilin of participating in the working group. Alternatively, if Fretilin chooses not to participate, IRI will need to offer the party materials and programs independent of the working group.

In addition, as IRI expected, internship programs are unheard of in East Timor. University officials that have been approached have so far been superficially interested in participating. Their unfamiliarity with the concept is slowing the establishment of a formal program. However IRI will continue to engage with university officials in an effort to convince them of the benefits to both students and universities of participation in this program. IRI's letters of intent and program outline has helped explain the concept. Negotiations in the coming quarter will need to further explain to university officials the roles and responsibilities of the implementing partners and move from concept to implementation.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The first meeting of the working group will be held in the next quarter. IRI anticipates from this meeting a schedule of research topics will be created, a calendar set for regular working group meetings, and a decision of when IRI will host the first training seminar. IRI will also print and distribute to working group members the first briefing memo outlining core electoral framework issues that future briefs will cover. This will provide the working group a framework from which to start its discussions. In the next quarter, IRI will continue discussions aimed at formalizing relationships with universities in order to begin the internship program to support the research needs of the working group.